

# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## 2008 SCORING GUIDELINES

### Question 3

(Function of a Foil)

The score reflects the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, its style, its mechanics. Students are rewarded for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by 1 point above the otherwise appropriate score. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a 3.

- 9–8** These essays offer a well-focused and persuasive analysis of how a foil or minor character emphasizes, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of a main character. Using apt and specific textual support, these essays fully explore that relationship and demonstrate what it contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole. Although not without flaws, these essays make a strong case for their interpretation and discuss the literary work with significant insight and understanding. Generally, essays scored a 9 reveal more sophisticated analysis and more effective control of language than do those scored an 8.
- 7–6** These essays offer a reasonable analysis of how a foil emphasizes, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of a main character. They explore that relationship and demonstrate what it contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole. These essays show insight and understanding, but the analysis is less thorough, less perceptive, and/or less specific in supporting detail than that of those in the 9–8 range. Generally, essays scored a 7 present better-developed analysis and more consistent command of the elements of effective composition than do those scored a 6.
- 5** These essays respond to the assigned task with a plausible reading, but they tend to be superficial or underdeveloped in analysis. They often rely on plot summary that contains some analysis, implicit or explicit. Although the essays attempt to discuss how the foil illuminates the distinctive characteristics and qualities of a main character and how the relationship contributes to the work as a whole, they may demonstrate a rather simplistic understanding of the work. Typically, these responses reveal unsophisticated thinking and/or immature writing. They demonstrate adequate control of language, but they may lack effective organization and may be marred by surface errors.
- 4–3** These lower-half essays offer a less than thorough understanding of the task or a less than adequate treatment of it. They reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the work, or they may fail to establish the relationship between the foil and a main character. They may not address or develop a response to how that relationship contributes to the work as a whole, or they may rely on plot summary alone. Their assertions may be unsupported or even irrelevant. Often wordy, elliptical, or repetitious, these essays may lack control over the elements of college-level composition. Essays scored a 3 may contain significant misreading and demonstrate inept writing.
- 2–1** Although these essays make some attempt to respond to the prompt, they compound the weaknesses of those in the 4–3 range. Often, they are unacceptably brief or are incoherent in presenting their ideas. They may be poorly written on several counts and contain distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. The ideas are presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Particularly inept, vacuous, and/or incoherent essays must be scored a 1.
- 0** These essays do no more than make a reference to the task.
- These essays either are left blank or are completely off topic.

In the Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan, the character Huang Taitai serves as a foil for main character Lindo Jong. Huang's personality emphasizes Lindo's qualities by contrast. The distinct relationship between the two aids to illuminate the meaning of the literary work. In reaction to Huang's actions, Lindo reveals who she is and finds her inner, at first unknown strength.

Lindo Jong finds herself engaged to Tyan-yu, son of Huang, when a flood in their village destroys Lindo's home. Lindo must separate from her family, but promises she will behave and not destroy the family's reputation. But Lindo soon finds out this arrangement is not as easy as she thought it would be because Huang does not seem to be in her favor. Huang treats Lindo as if she were an ordinary servant, forcing her to do menial tasks such as cooking all the meals and cleaning the house. But through these endless tasks, Lindo builds her character. She learns to do things with dexterity and perfection. She can smell if something she cooked was too salty without tasting it, and could sew so well, it looked as if the designs were painted on. Lindo learned to pride herself in these accomplishments because they were all she had. Lindo received no love or appreciation from her soon to be mother in law and husband. Tyan-yu did whatever he could to upset her, and Huang criticized everything she did and thought Lindo was not good enough



for the family. Due to the treatment Lindo received on a daily basis, Huang was able to brainwash Lindo into thinking she had a good life here, and that she owed everything she had to Huang, and in turn had to do all that she wanted.

But later on, Lindo recognizes what Huang had done to her on her wedding day. Huang had taken away Lindo's spirit and mentality of her self worth, and replaced it with what Huang wanted. As Lindo looked into the mirror before she got married, she once again felt empowered. She decided she would get out of the marriage, without bringing shame unto her family. When a servant performed a night long ritual of watching a burning candle last all night to represent the never ending marriage between Lindo and Tyan-yu, Lindo looked on because she couldn't sleep. She hated Tyan-yu and Huang and wished the candle would be blown out by the wind. When this actually happened, she realized her power and was even more determined to escape the belittling marriage. And so Lindo cleverly came up with a plan about how if the marriage continued, Tyan-yu's grandparents would kill him because the marriage was not meant to be. When she told Huang her story, she persuaded the whole family it was true. Then Huang let Lindo leave with her pile and a unknown but new future ahead of her.



All the actions in the relationship between Huang and Lindo illuminated the meaning of The Joy Luck Club. The book is all about the strength of individuals, knowing self worth, and being true to yourself. Because of Huang's treatment to Lindo, she found the power within herself to not just accept this forced marriage, and do something to change it. It shows that everyone has a say in what his or her future is, and that not standing up for yourself is just quietly giving up. By coming up with the ingenious plan, Lindo stayed true to herself, by doing what she thought was best for herself and would make her happy. But by leaving in a seemingly respectful and truthful way to Huang, Lindo proved to be still obedient to her parents wishes and orders, which she held in high esteem. The Huangs could not therefore curse and look down upon Lindo's family, because Lindo was a good daughter in law and wife. Lindo in the end, realized her self worth. During her days in Huang's house, she was taught to think of herself as nothing, but soon formed her new ideology in knowing her worth. She said that "every year I buy myself 24 carat gold bracelets because I know what I am worth." She learned to respect herself and therefore illustrated the themes and meaning of the book.

Amy Tan's book The Joy Luck Club wisely uses the minor character of Huang Taitai to act as a foil to Lindo Jong.



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3A 4 of 4

Huang's relationship with Lindo emphasized Lindo's qualities and strengths she did not even acknowledge she had possessed. The distinct relationship between the two characters serves to greatly illuminate the meanings of the book. Huang Taitai helped to highlight and emphasize all of Lindo's good qualities.

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The color purple highlights the life of Celie, as a young black girl, raised in an oppressive male society. With no mother, Celie's father took complete control of her life, forcing her to even have sex with him. Celie continued to face male dominance and a lack of free will. However, through the help of female relationships, Celie finds her true self.

Although he only appears in the first of the novel, Celie's father's actions impact the rest of her life. As Celie faces traumatic experience from the oppressive men, her close friends help her find meaning in life and reach self-actualization.

Before Celie can reach her full potential, she must complete the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. However, the second level of needs of love and belonging cannot be met through her father. In her early teens, Celie's father rapes her, leaving a lasting memory. With no one to turn to, Celie has no means of coping with her fears; therefore she believes she should succumb to a man's demand. When Celie's father forces her into a marriage, he merely wants to rid himself of the burden of having a daughter. Whenever Celie's new husband orders her to cook or clean, she obliges. Therefore, she submits her free will and cannot reach self-actualization. As Celie encounters other women through the novel, they too believe in obeying their husbands' every command. Being oppressed by this male dominance gives Celie no freedom to choose; furthermore, she lives a life



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dependent on the dominant males. Celie's father's one small action at the start of the novel dictates her actions through the first half of her life. Celie has no voice or opinion, and feels that she has found her place in the world. Celie did not realize that she ~~sub~~ sacrificed her free will and cut herself short from her true potential.

Had Celie not found strength in her strong female bonds, she would have never reached self-actualization. When Celie ~~met~~ <sup>meets</sup> Shug, her entire life ~~changes~~ <sup>changes</sup>. Shug was an independent woman whom no one could stop. Therefore, Shug ~~teaches~~ <sup>teaches</sup> Celie how to be her self. When Celie first ~~met~~ <sup>encounters</sup> Shug, she was singing Karaoke at a bar. Shug ~~had~~ <sup>has</sup> a domineering personality who ~~did~~ <sup>does</sup> not listen to any men. By helping Celie learn to say "no" to oppressive men, Shug ultimately ~~led~~ <sup>leads</sup> her to her true self. Celie discovers her passion for making jeans. She can make jeans for every size and shape with unique designs of the customer's choice. With Shug's love and affection, she inspires Celie to reach for her dreams. Rather than being constrained by men, Celie separates from the oppressive male figures in her life and declares herself independent of all others. When Celie establishes her own business for making jeans, she becomes completely economically independent. Since Shug gives Celie the love and sense of belonging that she ~~the~~ needs, Celie can continue up Maslow's hierarchy. With



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Celle's new sense of free will, she can identify her true self. The strong female bonds celle develops allow her to reach self-actualization and establish her self-worth.

Although celle's father makes a brief appearance at the start of the novel, he attempts to affect celle's life. Serving as a foil, he represents every characteristic that celle learns not to be. Therefore, with the help of her female friends, celle finds her true identity. She learns to overcome the traumatic experiences of her adolescence and continues life with a new sense of hope. Shug provides the love and belonging celle needs to complete Maslow's hierarchy; therefore, she ultimately reaches self-actualization. Through this process, celle becomes independent from all dominant males and finds her true self.

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3C<sub>102</sub>

In the book The Kite Runner, ~~it~~ it is discovered that the character Baba is also the father to Hassan, who was his servant's son. Baba is a foil to Hassan in many ways. He emphasizes the good qualities in Hassan.

Baba is a very loyal character. He kept his same servant, Hassan's father, his whole life. He always helped them out and looked after them. Hassan is just like this. He looks after Amir and always has his back. When Amir framed Hassan for stealing, Hassan took the blame for him. Hassan also stood up for Amir when some boys were wanting to fight him.

Baba wasn't always a truthful person. However, he only withheld the truth if it would hurt someone. He didn't tell Amir for a long time that he was also Hassan's brother. Hassan also wasn't always truthful. He had good intentions however he knew Amir had framed him but didn't tell Baba the truth.

The character of Baba was extravagant. He was very popular and knew many people. He held outrageous parties and was very wealthy.



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This contrasts greatly with Hassan's character. He had very little possessions, being the son of a servant and destined to become one himself. He was very humble and knew few people. He kept mostly to himself.

The meaning of The Kite Runner is loyalty and friendship. Both Baba and Hassan are loyal people and value their friendships with other people. Baba's foil to Hassan helps show this throughout the novel.

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# AP<sup>®</sup> ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

## 2008 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 3

#### Overview

The prompt for question 3, the “open” question, began by noting that in literary works, a minor character, often known as a foil, possesses traits that emphasize, by contrast or comparison, the distinctive characteristics and qualities of the main character. The prompt added that the ideas or behavior of the minor character might be used to highlight the weaknesses or strengths of the main character. Students were then asked to choose a novel or play in which a minor character serves as a foil to a main character and to write an essay analyzing how the relation between the minor character and the major character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole.

The aim of this prompt was to assess students’ abilities to move beyond paraphrase or summary, which focuses on description of events in the text, to comparative analysis of the foil and the major character as a way of understanding the larger significance of the work. To respond to the question successfully, students needed to write an effective and well-organized essay that grounded persuasive analysis of the meaning of the work in a detailed character analysis.

#### Sample: 3A

##### Score: 8

This detailed discussion of *The Joy Luck Club* provides a perceptive analysis, amply supported with evidence. The essay correctly suggests that the “book is all about the strength of individuals, knowing self worth, and being true to yourself.” The student chooses Huang Taitai as an appropriate foil to Lindo Jong and demonstrates in detail how “Huang was able to brainwash Lindo into thinking she had a good life . . . , and that she owed everything she had to Huang.” The essay is insightful and mature in its understanding of the novel and quite well written, employing a rich, precise vocabulary. Although there is some plot summary in the early portions of the response, the length of the essay allows for plenty of thoughtful interpretation.

#### Sample: 3B

##### Score: 6

This essay on *The Color Purple* develops an implicit argument about male oppression and how Celie’s father’s abuses affect her as a character and influence her concept of herself. The middle part of the essay is unfocused and—at first—implies that Shug serves as Celie’s foil. It is not until the very end of the essay, in the concluding paragraph, that the student finally states explicitly that Celie’s father is her foil, representing “every characteristic that Celie learns not to be.” Although the discussion of this novel briefly alludes to Maslow’s hierarchy, it does not fully develop how Celie achieves self-actualization.

#### Sample: 3C

##### Score: 4

This discussion of *The Kite Runner* provides a less-than-adequate treatment of Baba as the foil to the main character Hassan: “He emphasizes the good qualities in Hassan.” The essay’s very thin development and rather vague supporting evidence make the analysis unconvincing. Short, repetitively constructed, declarative sentences (“Hassan is just like this,” “He had good intentions however,” “The character of Baba was extravagant”) contribute to the impression that the discussion is, on the whole, simplistic.